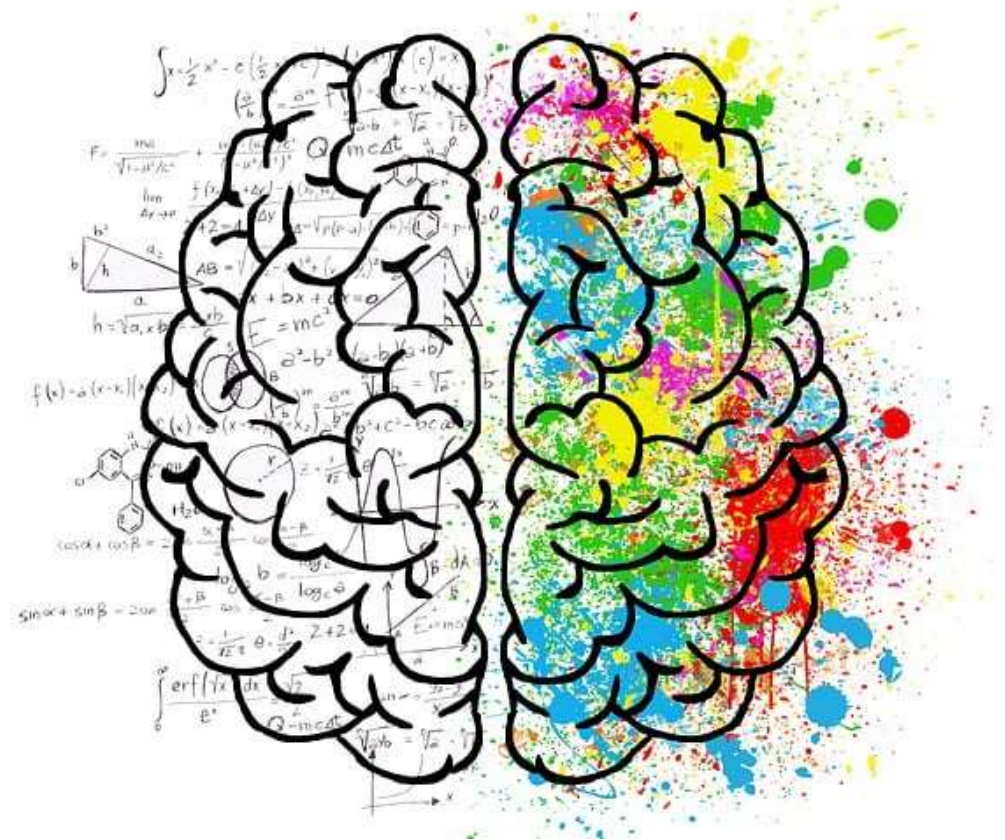


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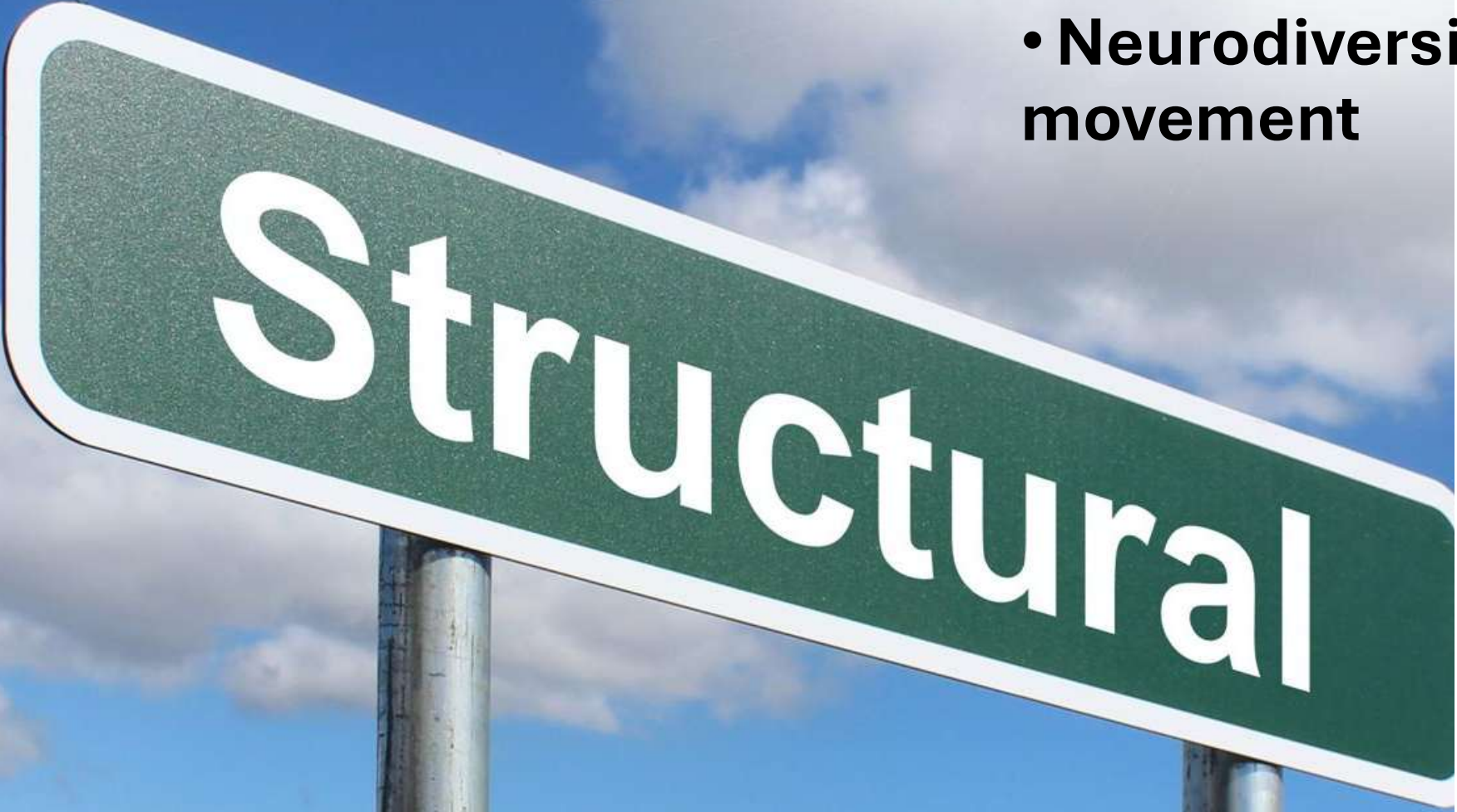
Psychopathological Classifications and Provisions

Week 6

Autism spectrum Disorder



- **Autism**
- **Neurodiversity movement**



Structural

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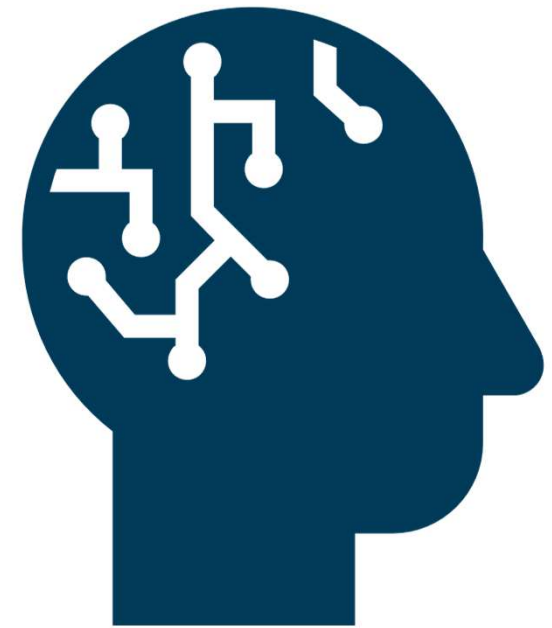
Autism Spectrum Disorder

What is autism

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2022), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that affects communication and behaviour.

Although autism can be diagnosed at any age, it is said to be a “developmental disorder” because symptoms generally appear in the first two years of life.

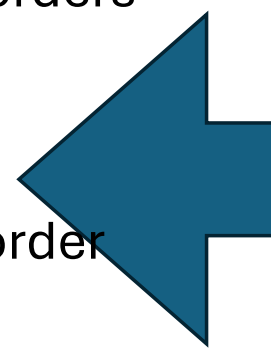
Autism is known as a “spectrum” disorder because there is wide variation in the type and severity of symptoms people experience.





Neurodevelopmental Disorders in ICD-11

- 
- (1) disorders of intellectual development
 - (2) developmental speech or language disorders
 - (3) autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
 - (4) developmental learning disorders
 - (5) developmental motor coordination disorder
 - (6) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
 - (7) stereotyped movement disorder
 - (8) other neurodevelopmental disorders



New category in ICD-11
Disorders with early onset affecting cognitive and social communicative development
Multifactorial in origin
Complex sex differences and long lasting impairments into adulthood (Stein et al., 2020)



Common Features

- (a) an onset that is invariably during infancy or childhood;
- (b) an impairment or delay in the development of functions that are strongly related to biological maturation of the central nervous system; and
- (c) a steady course that does not involve the remissions and relapses that tend to be characteristic of many mental disorders.

A broad spectrum in presentation and outcome

- Some argue that ASD should not be included in the ICD-11 chapter about mental health disorders as a neural developmental disorder (tonyattwoodcom.au)
 - Especially some are high functioning
- Frequently combined with intellectual disability
 - Overlap with traits of OCD, psychosis and higher anxiety and depression in some
- Lower employment rate (Autism Speak, n.d.)
- Increasing diagnosis and largest number on assessment for ECHP (2024)
- Higher rate and longer stay in inpatient facilities (National Autistic Society, n.d.; NHS, 2024)
- Higher prevalence in GEM in the US (Autism Speak, n.d.)
- Higher prevalence in black and Chinese boys show intersection with socioeconomic status and home language in the UK (Roman-Urrestarazu et al., 2021)



Dr Temple talks about autism. Are there changes in her communication between her younger self and now?

Comparing classification systems (adapted from Open University, n.d.)

System

Main types of symptoms

Subtypes

Onset

ICD-10

1) communication
2) social interaction
3) restrictive, repetitive activities and interests (RRBIs).

1) Subtypes such as Childhood autism atypical autism, Asperger syndrome;
2) Pervasive developmental disorder

Functional impairment in either communication or social by age 3

DSM 5

1) social communication
2) restrictive, repetitive activities and interests; sensory difficulties.

No subtype, a spectrum

Difficulties in 1 or 2 appear in early childhood ; functional impairment maybe later

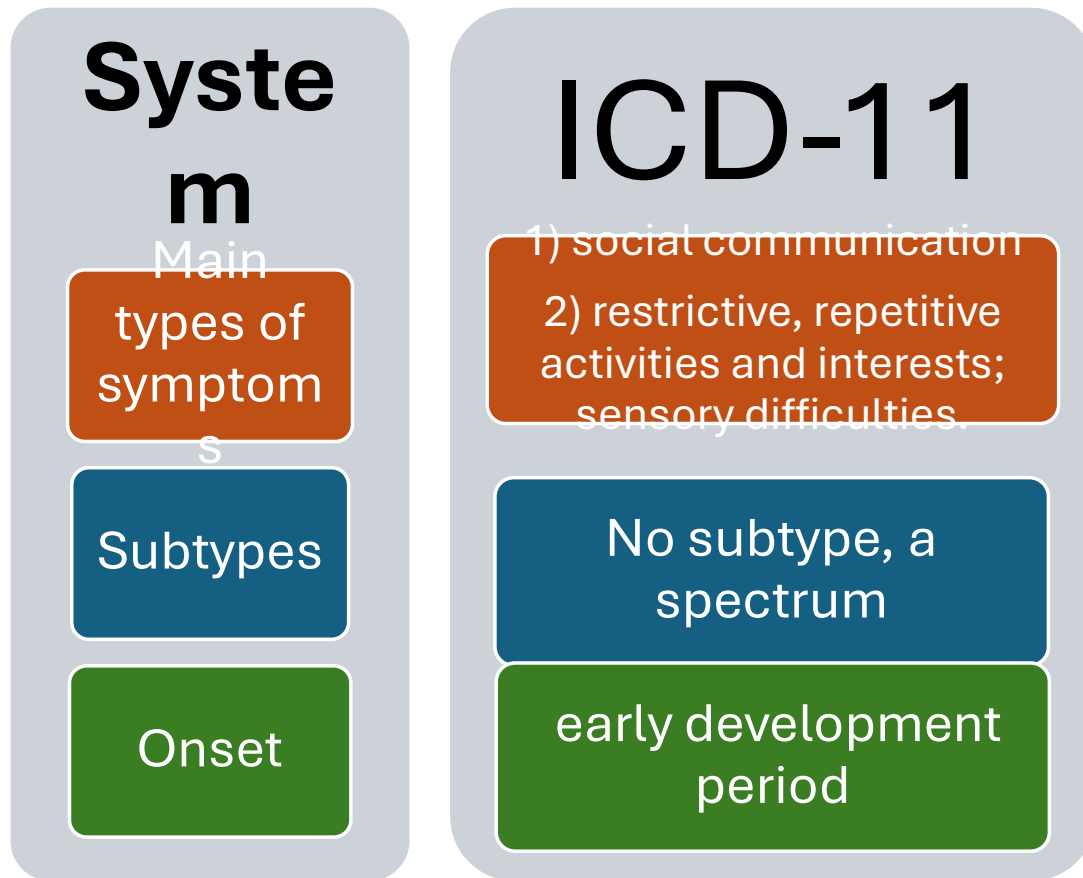
ICD-11

1) social communication
2) restrictive, repetitive activities and interests; sensory difficulties.

No subtype, a spectrum

early development period

Closer look at ICD-11



No fixed age for onset

Presentation throughout lifespan (Reeds et al., 2019)

Better synchronised with DSM 5: No subtype but a spectrum

Quantifiers to indicate the extent of impairment used instead (Reeds et al., 2019; Stein et al., 2020) → better able to capture changes with age in functioning

- Intellectual functioning
- Functioning in language and communicative
- Mental health as well as medical and genetic comorbidity (Stein et al., 2020)

No longer exclusive from ADHD, with strong implications on the use of medication



Challenges experienced - Autism

- Communication impairment/limitation
- Limited theory of mind
- **Hypersensitivity/hyposensitivity – sensory stimulus (sounds, touch, taste)**
- Changes in terms of social interaction
- Limited eye contact
- Routine and rigidity in daily functioning

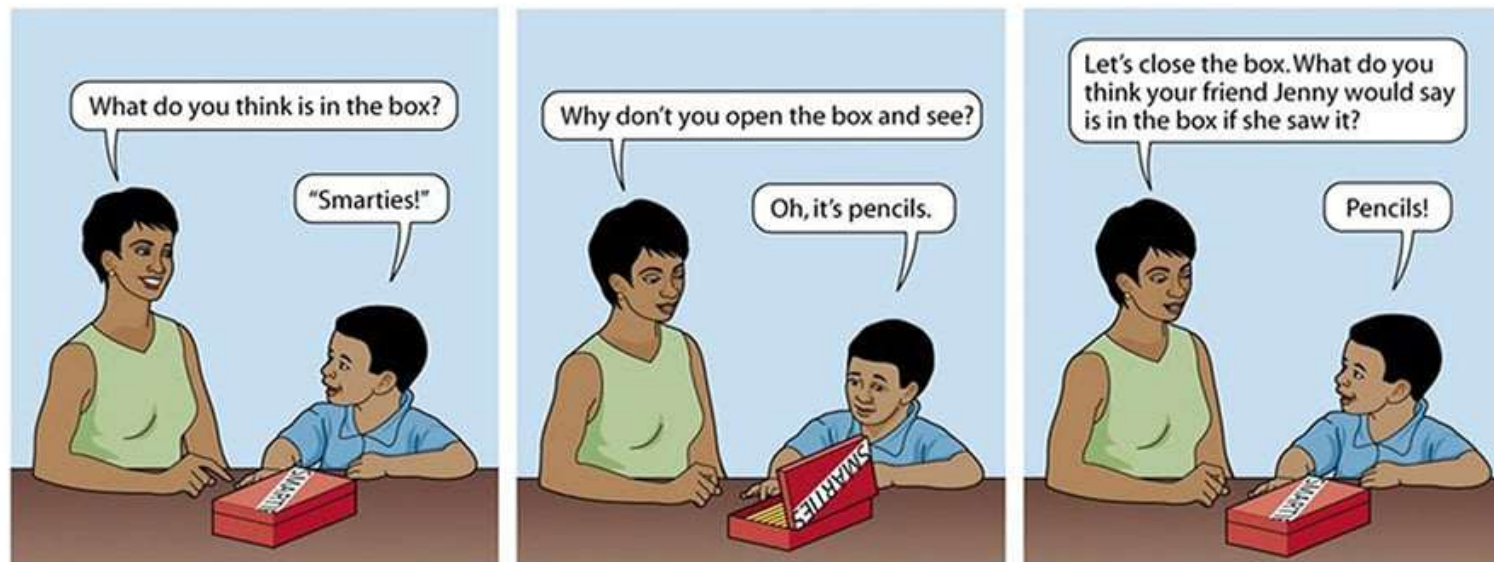


Signs of Autism - Children

- Lack of eye contact
- Limited response to sensory cues
- May not respond to name
- Repetitive behaviors or actions: Flapping, repeating same terms
- Limited interactions with other children
- Limited emotional responses such as smiling

Psychological explanation of autism: Theory of mind deficit

A False-Belief Problem: The “Smarties” Task



To pass this task, you need to be able to hold multiple representations: your earlier false belief about the chocolate, what you now know about the pencils and that your friend does not know about the pencils. A four year old can pass the task of reality (pencils) and appearance (smarties) when a much older autistic child cannot pass



Theory of mind
measured by the
Sally –Anne task
(Baron-Cohen et
al., 1985)

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=41jSdOQQpv0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41jSdOQQpv0)

A much older child doing the Sally-Ann task. How does his behaviour compare to the little girl?

It is a useful concept to explain the difficulty in understanding other's and social interaction. But it does not explain the restricted and repetitive behaviour



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjkTQtggLH4>

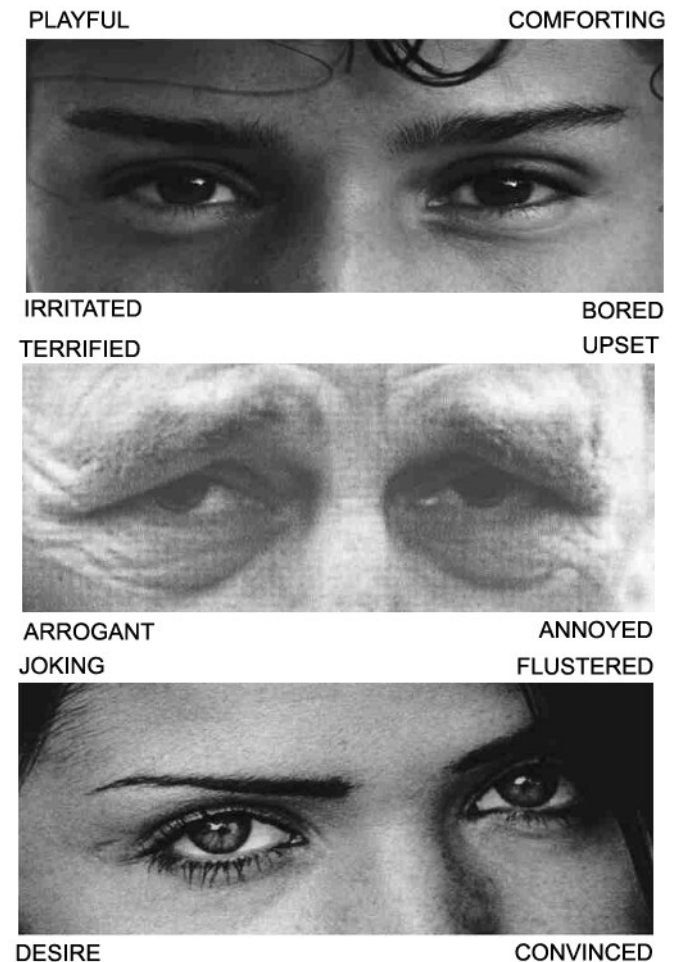
RTMIE task (Baron-Cohen et al, 2015)

High functioning autistic individuals can pass the Theory of Mind task without understanding other's mind.

The Reading the mind in the eyes task measures the affective Theory of Mind: both verbal and non-verbal understanding (Baron-Cohen et al., 2015)

Some studies also measured the participant's brainwaves when they are completing the task

Age effect in some adults as processing in emotion display is affected



Reading the Mind in the eyes task

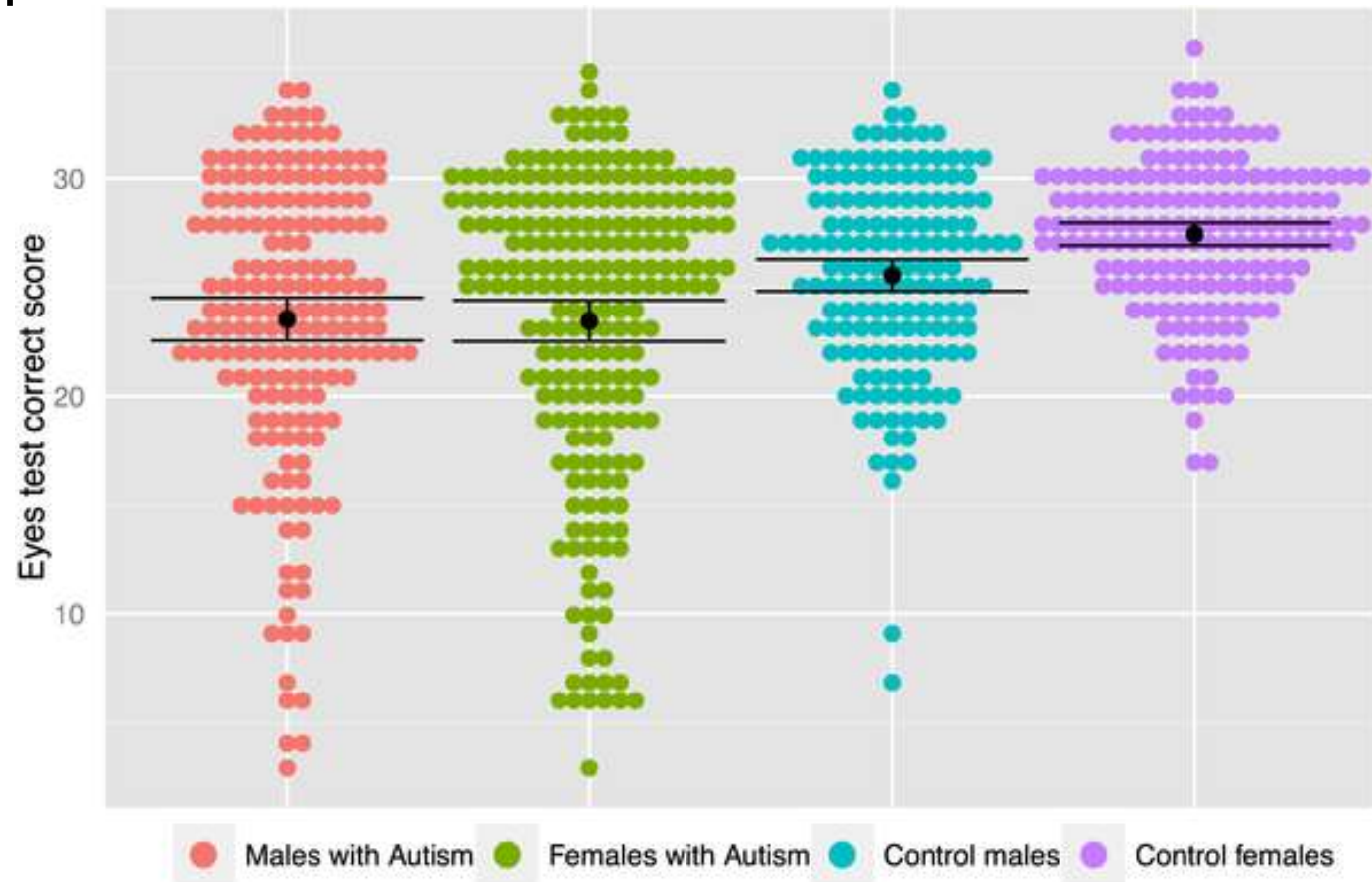
In general, female better at this task than male (see higher mean in purple data compared to blue data)

On the other hand, individuals with ASD performed poorer in this task.

No gender differences and some very low scores in these two groups.

Again it does not explain the repetitive and restricted interest.

Fig 1. Performance accuracy on the Eyes test by group.

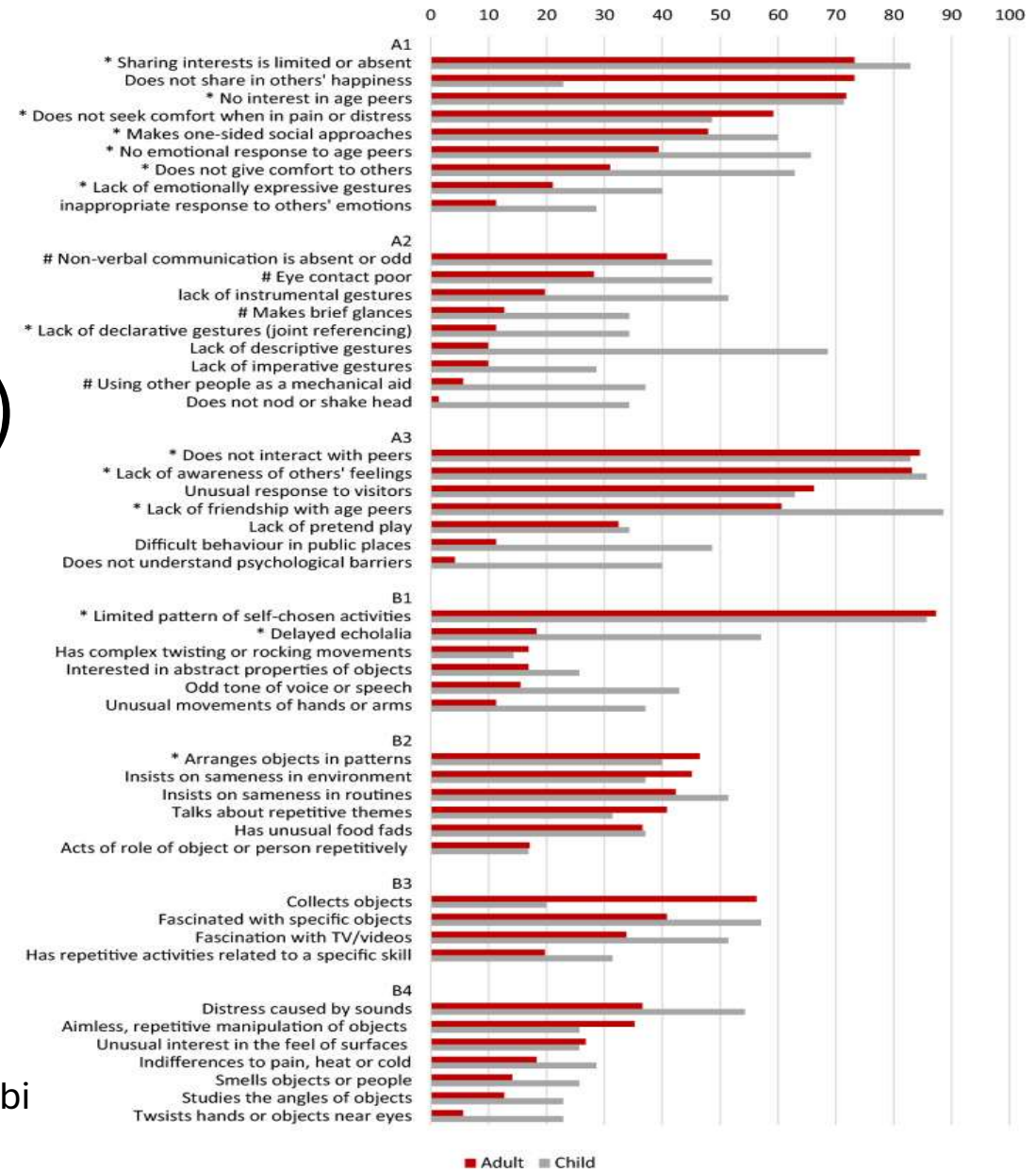


Baron-Cohen S, Bowen DC, Holt RJ, Allison C, Auyeung B, et al. (2015) The “Reading the Mind in the Eyes” Test: Complete Absence of Typical Sex Difference in ~400 Men and Women with Autism. PLOS ONE 10(8): e0136521. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0136521>

Making diagnosis: Multi-Disciplinary Team

- Pediatrician
- Psychologist (appropriate based on age)
- Educational Psychologist
- Clinical Psychologist
- Occupational Therapist

The Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders: DISCO (Leekam et al., 2002)



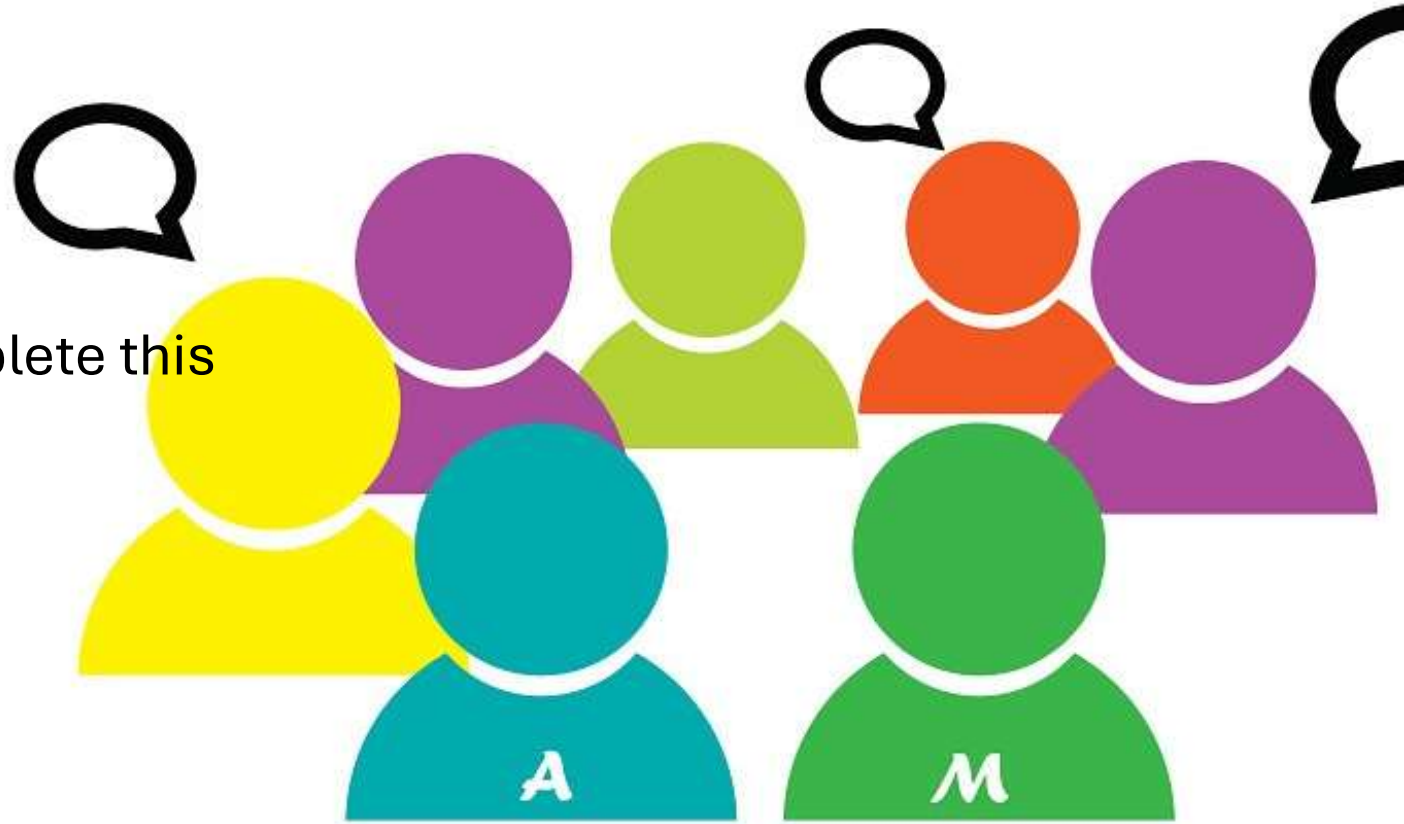
Graph from (Carrington et al., 2020)

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6841916/bin/10803_2019_4214_Fig3_HTML.jpg

Diagnosis Tools of ASD

See Moodle for how to complete this week's forum activity

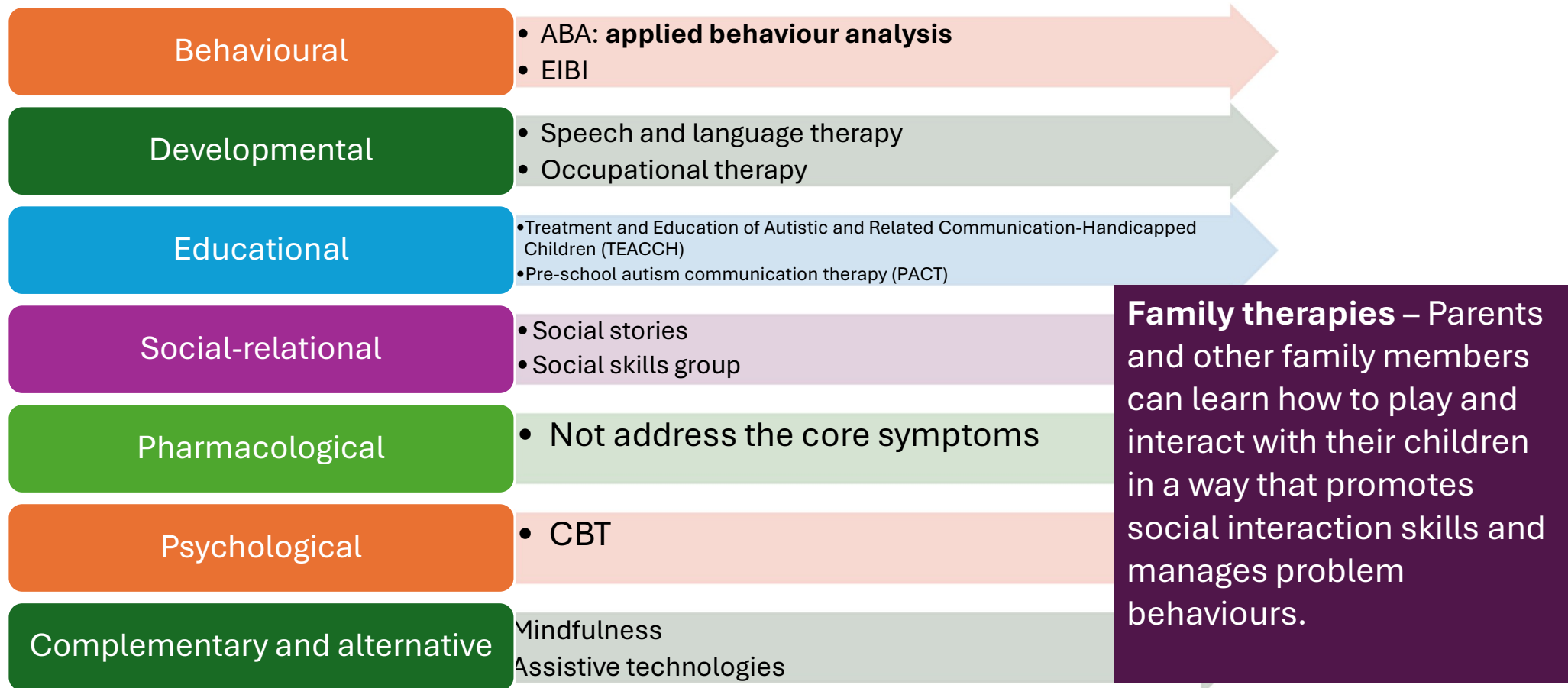
ADOS
ARI
DISCO



FORUM

How do we assess and diagnose Autism Spectrum Disorders?

Treatment and Intervention (US Centre for Disease and Control, n.d.)





Mosaic activity: Which treatment for ASD?

[Applied behaviour Analysis \(OpenLearn\)](#)

[Medication Treatment for Autism | NICHD - Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development \(nih.gov\)](#)

[What is AAC? - AssistiveWare](#)

[Picture Exchange Communication System \(PECS\) \(pecs-unitedkingdom.com\)](#)

[Treatments that are not recommended for autism - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

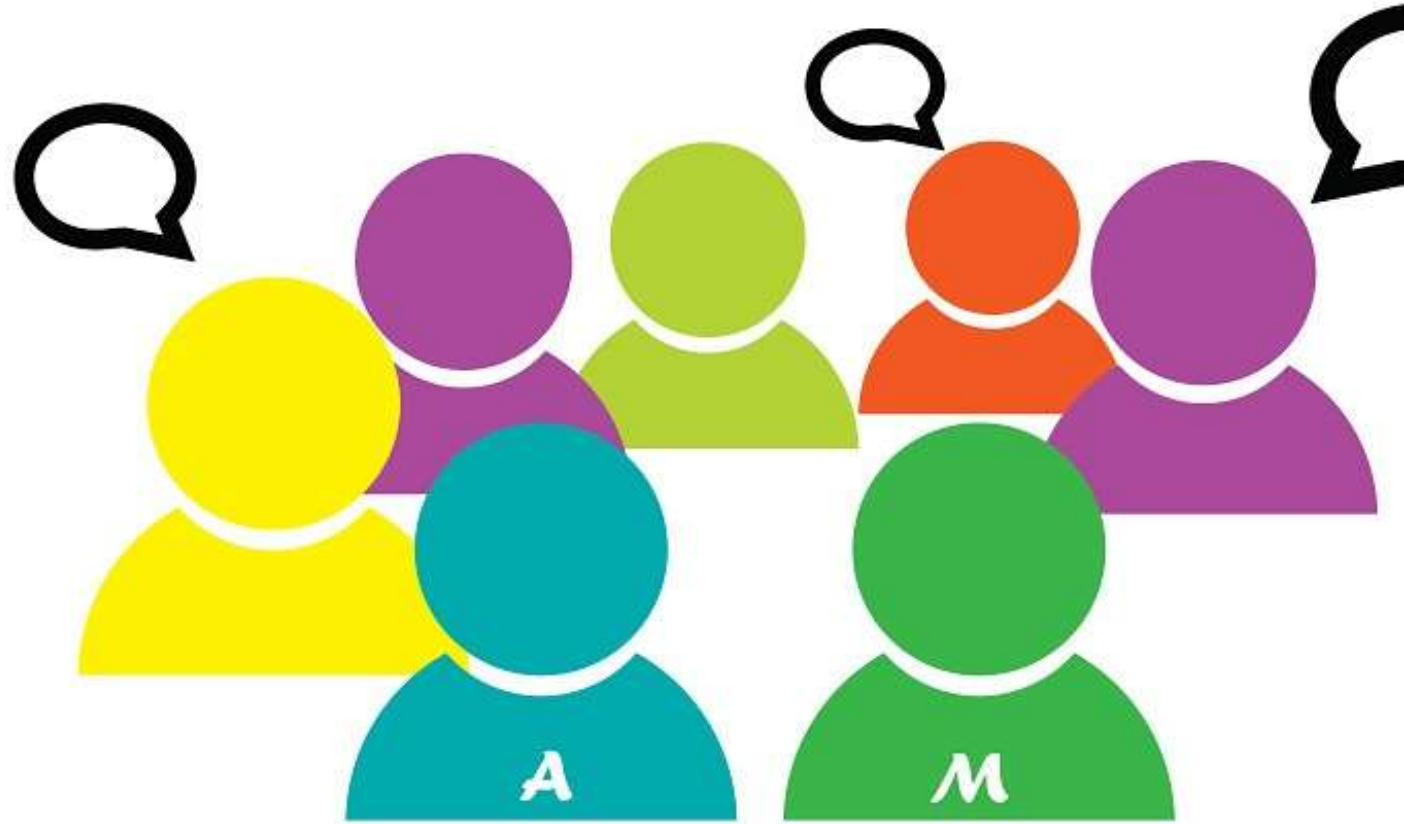
Children and young people with Autism in schools

- More likely to be placed in mainstream schools
- Provisions within mainstream schools inconsistent (Watkins, 2019): interviews with autistic adolescents, parent of autistic child and teachers who supported autistic children transitioned from primary to secondary schools
 - Bullying, anxiety and sense of isolation were frequently reported
 - Children with more severe ASD were more likely to be placed in mainstream secondary schools with special units whereas those with milder conditions were less likely to have the support and special provisions put in place for them



Did Hope feel she was listened to in school on the last slide?

What would you feel if you were in Hope's shoe?



Autism and health

- Shorter life expectancy and premature mortality
 - 3 times more likely to die between 2010-2016 in Canada compared to people without autism (Lunsky et al, 2022)
 - 2.06 times higher mortality than non-autistic Australian between 2001 and 2015 due to nervous and sense disorders (Hwang et al., 2019)
 - According to Hirvikoski et al (2016) a multitudes of medical conditions lead to higher pre-mature mortality in ASD
 - Especially for female with low functioning
 - Individuals with higher functioning higher risk for suicide
- Greater risks of physical health conditions and complex health needs across lifespan of autistic individuals in the UK (Ward et al, 2023)
 - No single cause of poor physical health
 - Biological contributions
 - Socioeconomic issues related to negative life experiences and stigma
 - Poorer self-reported healthcare quality



Health and social care provisions need to be individually designed and taking into account the vulnerability of ASD individuals

Gender differences in ASD

- Most stereotyped autistic behaviours are biased towards male in the literature
- Harder to detect autism in females
- Masking is common in females: some show eye contact and animated facial expressions
 - To avoid stigma or prejudice (Perry et al., 2021)
 - “to blend in or ‘pass’ in a neurotypical world” (National Autistic Society, n.d.)
 - To avoid social rejection





Mosaic activity: learn more about ASD

- Each group focuses on one of the below
- [Number of autistic people in mental health hospitals \(autism.org.uk\)](http://autism.org.uk)
- Read the what we are calling for section in [Thousands sign our open letter to the Prime Minister \(autism.org.uk\)](http://autism.org.uk)
- What is [STOMP Everyone working together to stop the over use of psychotropic medicines and to improve people's quality of life \(england.nhs.uk\)](http://england.nhs.uk)

Individuals with Autism in mental hospital



Changing imagines of ASD in popular culture

A child isolated from the world

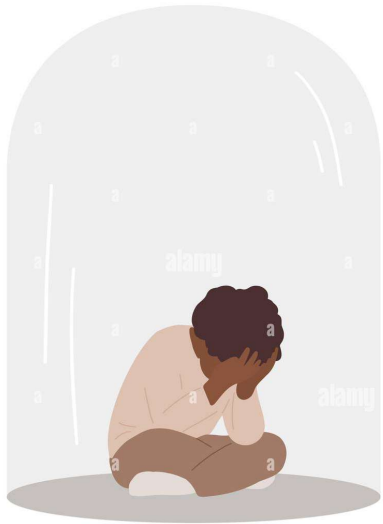


Image ID: 2809XCI
www.alamy.com

ASD caused by poor parenting



Card counting savant with super memory



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Socially awkward but highly intelligent

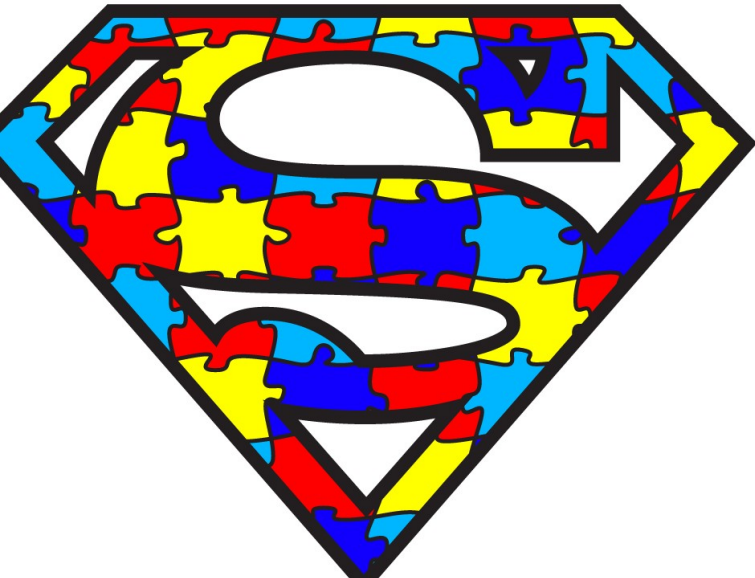


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Change in discourse about ASD: focused, persistent etc



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Greta Thunberg has likened her Asperger syndrome to a 'superpower' — some Fortune 500 employers appear to agree

'We need people who think outside the box and who aren't like everyone else,' the 16-year-old Swedish teenager said

By Meera Jagannathan

Published: Oct. 7, 2019 at 4:45 a.m. ET

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How helpful is it to tell young neurodivergent children with ASD that they have superpower?



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For the
remainder of
the session –
Practice your
Poster
presentation